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THE GARDEN CALENDAR.

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, extension horticulturist, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through WRC and 32 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, at 1:10 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Tuesday, January 14, 1930.

PRUNING

There are thousands of home owners the country over who have small orchards or fruit trees about their homes with whom the pruning of these trees is a real problem. I wish that it were within my power to drop in on you and give you a practical demonstration of how the work should be done or at least hand you a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1-8-1 on pruning. I shall be glad to send you a copy upon request, also several other bulletins which I shall mention, so better have pencil and paper ready.

Why do we prune fruit trees anyway? For a dozen different reasons, but they may all be summed up in saying "more and better fruit." Left entirely to themselves most fruit trees will develop into regular brush heaps and if producing fruit at all their fruit will be small, poorly colored and inferior. By pruning we thin out the branches and let sunlight into the center of the tree. This encourages the formation of vigorous fruit buds. Fruit will not develop high quality, color and finish unless the leaves of the tree get plenty of sunshine and are in a healthy condition. Pruning and spraying will help to maintain a healthy condition and it is difficult to spray a tree that has not been properly pruned. Let me say in passing that the pruning of fruit trees and shrubs is an art and requires thought and practice. I want also to warn you against the itinerant tree pruner who poses as an expert and who often turns out to be a tree butcher and ruins your trees for fruit production.

I realize that it is impossible for me to give you a pruning demonstration over the radio so will have to content myself by stating a few of the principles involved and then refer you to publications from which you can get information. In case of most fruits such as apple, pear, cherry, plum and peach, the shape and character of the tree is formed mainly during the first one or two years after planting. During this period the head or shape of the tree is established with spreading or supporting branches without crotches that will slip and the center of the tree as already suggested kept fairly open to admit the sunlight. The fruiting habits of the tree are also largely determined the first three or four years after which the pruning should be light and consist mainly in preventing the branches becoming too thick or too high above the ground.

Peaches are, in a way, an exception to most other fruits in that they require rather light pruning at first just enough to shape the trees until they reach bearing age. The fruit is borne on wood which grew the previous season and if there is a good growth the trees will require fairly heavy pruning. This consists of thinning out and cutting back considerable of the growth of the past season and occasionally removing branches where the tree has become too thick. Before starting to prune

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a tree walk entirely around it, study the shape of the tree, select the branches that you think should be removed and try to imagine how the tree will look after the removal of these branches, then proceed to prune the tree.

In cutting off branches always turn the blade of the pruning shears toward the trunk of the tree as this insures a smooth, clean cut without bruising the bark of the tree. When sawing off a large limb first make a cut on the under side of the limb about 5 inches from the trunk of the tree, then turn your saw to the upper side and make another cut to meet the one below. After the weight of the limb has been removed the stub may be sawed off close to the trunk of the tree with a clean, smooth cut without danger of splitting.

The proper pruning of grapes presents one of the most difficult problems for the average person, because of the different methods of handling the various types. Our native American bunch grapes, of which the Concord and the Niagara are good examples, are pruned and trained according to at least four different systems, of which the four-cane Kniffin system is perhaps the most common. Our native Muscadine group of the South is handled in a somewhat different manner while the European varieties grown in California are pruned according to other systems.

We prune grapes to renew the vines, reduce the bearing surface, and keep the bearing wood as near the main stem as possible. Grapes like most fruits, put on too many fruiting buds and by pruning or reducing the number of buds we get a stronger growth and better fruit. As a rule not more than 30 to 40 buds should be left on each vine and a smaller number on young vines. By the Kniffin system of training, a main stem rises from the root with 4 branches, two on each side, trained to two wires supported on posts. The side branches are, as a rule, not more than 3 or 4 feet in length.

In concluding my short talk on pruning today, I want to refer you to several bulletins which contain a lot of real information for fruit growers. They are:

Farmer's Bulletin 1-8-1 Pruning - tells how the various fruit trees should be pruned with illustrations, also shows the tools required for doing pruning.

Farmer's Bulletin 4-7-1 Grape Propagation, Pruning and Training - contains information on how to propagate grapes from cuttings, layers, grafting, etc. Methods of pruning and the different systems of training grapes.

Farmer's Bulletin 7-7-6 Growing Cherries East of the Rocky Mountains - tells how to plant, cultivate, prune and care for cherry trees also variety descriptions, picking, packing and marketing cherries.

Farmer's Bulletin 9-1-7 Growing Peaches - This bulletin covers the selection of the location for the peach orchard, propagation, pruning and general orchard management.

Farmer's Bulletin 1-2-8-4 Apple Orchard Renovation - tells how to make over an old or neglected apple orchard. This bulletin will be of great value to those who have neglected home orchards.

Farmer's Bulletin 1-3-6-0 Apple Growing East of the Mississippi River - discusses orchard sites, types of soil, securing trees for planting, laying out and planting the orchard, cultivation, pruning, in fact its 49 pages are packed full of good information, especially for growers in all humid apple regions.

One more and I will stop for today, it is Farmer's Bulletin 1-0-0-1 Growing Fruit for Home Use. The title of this bulletin really describes it but if you are growing a variety of fruits for home use I would advise you to get a copy. I shall be glad to send copies of any or all of these bulletins to those of you who are interested, that is so long as our supply lasts.

